

Osteoporosis

Patient Information Leaflet

MSK Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Service



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What is osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a condition where your bones become weaker and are more likely to break (fracture). You might break a bone even after just a minor injury such as a small fall or knock.

Osteoporosis itself does not usually cause pain. Pain is caused when a bone breaks, sometimes without an obvious injury or fall, rather than by the condition itself.

Osteopenia means your bones are weaker than expected, but not weak enough to be diagnosed as osteoporosis. This can be seen on a bone density scan (DEXA).

Why does it happen?

Anyone can get osteoporosis, but it is most common in older people, especially women after the menopause.

Things that increase your risk include:

- family history (genetic factors)
- lifestyle factors such as drinking too much alcohol and smoking
- health conditions like Crohn's disease or rheumatoid arthritis
- some medications such as long-term steroid tablets

How might osteoporosis affect me?

Fractures caused by osteoporosis (fragility fractures) are most common in the wrists, hips, and spine. Spinal fractures can lead to loss of height and a curved spine.

It's important to remember that some people with osteoporosis never break a bone. Medicines can help make bones stronger. There are lots of other ways to help look after your bone health too.

What can I do to help myself?

Exercise regularly

Bones get stronger when you use them. Weight-bearing and muscle-strengthening exercises are recommended to keep your bones healthy. Exercising regularly can also improve your balance, making you less likely to fall and sustain a fracture.

Weight-bearing impact exercise includes brisk walking, jogging, jumping, and tennis. Exercise is unlikely to cause a broken bone (fracture). But if you have osteoporosis, you may need to adapt and modify some exercises.

Muscle-strengthening exercise involves moving your muscles against resistance to make them stronger. Resistance can come from your own body weight, a

resistance band, or weights. There is no specific weight that is considered safe or unsafe for everyone. This will depend on your personal ability, whether you exercise regularly and how you lift the weight.

You can find more information on the Royal Osteoporosis Society website (see Helpful Resources).

Guidelines suggest:

- A minimum of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week. This is something that raises your heart rate and gets you breathing more heavily.
- Strength exercises twice a week.

Eat well

A healthy, balanced diet helps your bones stay strong. Calcium and vitamin D are two nutrients that are important for your bones.

Most people can get all the calcium they need from a balanced diet without taking supplements. You can get it from foods such as:

- milk, yoghurt, and cheese
- broccoli
- oranges

You can get vitamin D from:

- sunlight
- supplements
- foods such as oily fish, mushrooms, and eggs

The NHS recommends taking a daily supplement containing at least 10 micrograms (400 units) of vitamin D during autumn and winter.

You should consider year-round supplements if you:

- are aged 65 years and over
- have a history of vitamin D deficiency
- have very little or no sunshine exposure

Healthy Habits

- keep a healthy weight
- drink less alcohol
- stop smoking

When should I seek further help?

You should get medical help straight away if you have sudden pain after a fall or injury, especially pain in your hip, wrist or back.

Call 111 if you are unsure where to go.

Remember

Osteoporosis does not usually hurt unless a bone breaks.

Many people never have a fracture.

You can take steps to keep your bones strong.

It's never too late to start.

Helpful Resources

The Royal Osteoporosis Society

The Royal Osteoporosis Society website has a lot of helpful information about living with osteoporosis.

<https://theros.org.uk/>

How to exercise safely for bones

<https://theros.org.uk/information-and-support/exercise/how-to-exercise-safely-for-bones/>

Strength exercises

<https://theros.org.uk/information-and-support/exercise/exercise-for-bones/strength-exercise-to-help-make-your-bones-stronger/>

If you need help to understand this leaflet or would like it in a different language or format such as large print, Braille or audio, please ask a member of staff.



MSK Physiotherapy Service

Find out more about the MSK Physiotherapy Service and what we offer

www.leicspart.nhs.uk/service/musculoskeletal-msk-therapy-physiotherapy/



Further Resources

Access our other MSK Physiotherapy resources www.leicspart.nhs.uk/msk-physiotherapy-resources-getting-started/

Date implemented: August 2026

Last review: August 2026

Review date: August 2028

Leaflet Reference: CHS MSK 24 Osteoporosis Edition 1